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Facebook has been accused of colluding with OnlyFans to blacklist rival adult websites in a lawsuit filed in the US. ||Anisha,News|| 2022-02-24 14:44:43

Contributors

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This week, BBC News revealed that OnlyFans was being sued over claims it directed a social media company to disable accounts of adult entertainers by placing their content on a terrorism database.

Facebook has now been named as the company alleged to have conspired with OnlyFans in a class action filing. Its parent company, Meta, says the claims are "without merit".

UK website OnlyFans - best known for hosting pornography - has grown hugely in recent years. It lets users share video clips and photos with subscribers in return for a monthly fee.

Performers often use social media accounts to promote and link to adult websites showing their explicit content.

On Tuesday, BBC News revealed that rival adult website FanCentro is suing OnlyFans in the US.

The legal action claims that social media content of adult performers promoting rival websites to OnlyFans was placed on a database of extremist material shared between tech companies that is run by the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT).

The database - used by Facebook, YouTube and Twitter - flags terror content to other members so they can moderate similar content on their platform.

OnlyFans has not yet issued a legal response but a spokesperson said the company was aware of the claims and they had "no merit".

Now, a class action lawsuit has been launched which names Facebook as the company accused of colluding with OnlyFans.

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The lawsuit, made on behalf of three adult entertainers, lists both Facebook and OnlyFans' parent company as defendants. It was made by the same US legal firm, Milberg, which is suing OnlyFans directly.

The filing claims that performers' content was placed on the GIFCT's database despite not being terrorist in nature, and this led to reduced visibility on social media and a marked decline in traffic being driven to OnlyFans' rival websites.

Performers who only promoted their OnlyFans accounts on social media did not face this punitive content moderation - it is alleged - leading to a big growth in traffic visiting the website.

In recent years, performers using Instagram to promote and link to their adult websites have complained that even though they have not broken the site's community guidelines - they have been served with violation notifications and had posts removed.

The subsequent loss of visibility and promotion of these accounts became known as a "shadowban".



BBC investigations into OnlyFans:

- How it handles illegal sex videos
- The children selling explicit videos on OnlyFans
- Under the skin of OnlyFans

BBC News has spoken to a performer and adult website owner who say their incomes fell significantly after posts on Instagram - also owned by Meta - began being taken down in late 2018.

Both say they do not know how or why this happened. The performer says some of her posts - which typically feature her in a bikini or underwear - included tourist snaps when she was fully clothed.

In a statement, a Meta spokesperson said: "These allegations are without merit and we will address them in the context of the litigation as needed."

It said it had investigated and found no evidence the terrorism database had been abused, and added it could not comment on the performer and business owner claims without their usernames or website names.

Content hashed on the database run by the GIFCT is not independently audited.

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In a statement, a GIFCT spokesperson said: "We are not aware of any evidence to support the theories presented in this lawsuit between two parties with no connection to GIFCT."